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tree started. It is my judgment that not less than five hundred years have elapsed since these stones were covered by sedimentation, and I should think the time would not exceed one thousand.

As stone axes, knives and arrow-heads were searched for among these stones and not found, I think they were not used by the people who used the stones for cooking. Among so many stones of that kind, and in a camp, some tool would have been dropped. Such tools are found on the present surface in every neighborhood about here. If this should prove correct (that none were used by this people), it would prove that the stone axe is not so old as we have heretofore thought it to be. Or, did these people take extra care of their tools? Then why did the much later Indians having equal use for *their* tools, drop them all over the country? Or, were these suddenly abandoned on the introduction of steel tomahawks, knives and fire arms?

There are no Indian mounds within fifty miles of this camp. It was, therefore, hardly the work of the mound-builders. My ancestors for three generations were pioneers, and well acquainted with Indian character and customs from 1760 to 1820, and from Massachusetts to the Wabash, and while I have heard very many of their Indian stories I have never heard of their seeing anything like what I have described, nor do I remember to have seen it described in any account I ever read. Is this a new feature of an ancient subject? or am I illy informed on it?

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EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: A. S. PACKARD AND E. D. COPE.

——The session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science for 1885 has just adjourned its session at Ann Arbor, Michigan. The meeting presented many admirable features. Other things being equal, a university town has superior advantages for the conduct of scientific gatherings. The spirit of the place is congenial. Facilities for presentation and illustration are at hand. The university buildings furnish excellent assembly rooms. The social conditions are appropriate and not distracting. Such were the circumstances which attended the late meeting, and the members experienced their benefits to the full. The number of members in attendance (510) though smaller than at many previous meetings, may be safely asserted to have embraced a larger percentage of the scientific element than they. Although the number of papers read (175) was smaller than at some preceding meetings, the quality, in many of the sections at least, was exceedingly good. If it were possible we should prefer that the American Association might always meet beneath the shadow of a university, and in a town like Ann Arbor, whose *raison d'etre* consists of the university which it contains. But such towns are rare in the United States, and we cannot expect to be always surrounded by the favorable conditions of the meeting which has just closed its sessions.

—— The controversy over the question whether the human embryo has a genuine tail like that of the embryo of other mammals, has been nearly set at rest by the painstaking researches of Professor Fol, of Geneva.

We have translated his article from the reprint in the *Journal de Micrographie* for June, and the reader may for himself see how this skilled histologist has proved the presence for a short period in embryos in the fifth and sixth week of their development, of four embryonic vertebræ, which after the sixth week fuse together; the tail itself at first elongated and regularly conical, becoming shorter and more rudimentary. Professor Fol, in closing, simply contents himself with remarking that the embryo human tail well deserves the name, and that the organ "evidently deprived of all physiological utility, should be classed in the number of representative organs."

This temporary, deciduous organ, which appears for only a brief period and still comparatively early in embryonic life, points unmistakably to the origin of man from some tailed mammal, whether a monkey, or some less specialized form, possibly allied to that generalized type, the lemur.

This instance is one of several others in the growth and structure of the human body which affords so strong circumstantial evidence of man's descent from some lower animal form, that it amounts, in minds trained to embryological, histological and anatomical methods, to the strongest probability.

—— The death of that veteran French naturalist, Henri Milne-Edwards, who at the great age of eighty-five passed away July 29, in his house in Rue Cuvier near the Jardin des Plantes, is a notable event in the history of biological science. Milne-Edwards will be remembered as a physiologist for his discovery of the principle of the physiological division of labor, as well as his laborious and extensive work, in fourteen volumes, on comparative physiology and anatomy. But as a zoölogist his fame was wider. He was to France what Owen is in England and Agassiz was in America. His special anatomical memoirs were conspicuous examples of the skill and nicety in injection and dissection which characterized the Cuvierian school, his treatises on the organs of circulation of Crustacea being of marked beauty and value. His general zoölogical works were the Histoire Naturelle des Crustacés, published with the aid of Audouin, and with Haime, an extended work on corals. Biologists, being human beings, have a spice of dogmatism and sectarianism in their nature, and in a notice of the great French naturalist in an English scientific journal, it is stated that Milne-Edwards did not late in life change his views as to the origin of species. We never knew, however, of his publicly attacking champions of the new biology. In his son, Alphonse Milne-Edwards, the family name is not now less conspicuous than for the past fifty years as a leading one in French biological science.

—— The U. S. Coast Survey, which for so many years under the direction of Bache and others rendered such signal service to science while pursuing its legitimate work, has been clouded by alleged official misconduct. Charity will be felt for any one who suffers official punishment after life-long services to science and the public welfare. Long before the present civil service reform in politics, the Coast Survey was managed with singular ability and economy. Its work will go on as long as geological agencies produce changes, however minute, in our coast lines and harbor approaches, whether "a thousand years" or more. Our other scientific bureaus have certainly been conducted with far more ability and economy than some departments and bureaus filled by political appointments. Still, rigid economy and business tact will be demanded of our scientific directors and commissioners, as they have been in the past.

—— We have received the following:

Editor AMERICAN NATURALIST—Sir:—In the August issue of your magazine you state: "If the bureaus of the Government would send their return receipts with or in the publications they issue, every one concerned would be greatly accommodated. The return receipts would then be promptly returned, whereas as now sent at another time, it requires time and trouble to identify the package referred to, which sometime results in a failure to return the receipt as desired."

Pardon me if I suggest that the above criticism has been made without due reflection. First, experience demonstrates that the receipts sent with the volumes are returned in a much smaller per cent than if sent in special letters at other times. Second, if the receipt is sent with the book and the book is lost, the receipt is lost. If the receipt is sent in a separate, special letter, the author expects the book, watches for its arrival, and if it does not come informs the office, and usually in time so that the book may be immediately traced through the mails.

On all accounts it is better to send the receipt by a special letter independent of the book itself, and in advance of the book.

I am, yours cordially,
J. W. Powell.

Our readers now have both sides of the question. Our own experience as to the ease of returning receipts, differs from that of the distinguished director of the U. S. Geological Survey. But if the department is satisfied with the system no one else need complain.

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RECENT LITERATURE.

Forbes' A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago.[1]—Though inferior in general scientific interest and literary execution to Wallace's Malay Archipelago, Mr. Forbes has produced an excellent book of travels, which we have read with much interest. Most of the islands visited by Wallace were also visited by our author, but the routes of the two travelers were in each island different. The book, as the author modestly states, is a transcript of the more interesting of the field-notes made during his wanderings, and is to be "considered" in the light of an addendum to Wallace's "model book of travel."

Besides his observations on the formation of the Cocos-keeling islands and numerous entomological and ornithological notes, the matter largely relates to the botany of these islands, as well as the manners and customs of the natives and mixed races with whom Mr. Forbes was in constant contact. No detailed account of the Timor-laut islands has appeared before that of Mr. Forbes, and little has been published on the inhabitants of the interior of Timor; and, by the way, a residence in Timor, owing to the deadly fever of the coast and the continual warfare between the different villages, was not found to be particularly comfortable. Indeed, considering coast fevers, insect pests, venomous animals, not to mention an occasional tiger, thieving natives, the liability of meeting Malays "running a muck," the jealousy and selfishness of native officials, and tropical heats, rains, earthquakes and an occasional volcanic eruption or cyclone, a naturalist's life in the East Indian archipelago has its lights and shades.

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[1] *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago.* A narrative of travel and exploration from 1878 to 1883. By Henry O. Forbes, F.R.G.S., etc. With numerous illustrations from the author's sketches and descriptions, by Mr. John B. Gibbs. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1885. 8vo, pp. 536.